

First Responders Urged Not To Respond To Hurricane Impact Areas Unless Dispatched By State, Local Authorities

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WASHINGTON D.C. -- Michael D. Brown, Under Secretary of Homeland Security for Emergency Preparedness and Response and head of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), today urged all fire and emergency services departments not to respond to counties and states affected by Hurricane Katrina without being requested and lawfully dispatched by state and local authorities under mutual aid agreements and the Emergency Management Assistance Compact.

"The response to Hurricane Katrina must be well coordinated between federal, state and local officials to most effectively protect life and property," Brown said. "We appreciate the willingness and generosity of our Nation's first responders to deploy during disasters. But such efforts must be coordinated so that fire-rescue efforts are the most effective possible."

The U.S. Fire Administration, part of FEMA, asks that fire and emergency services organizations remain in contact with their local and state emergency management agency officials for updates on requirements in the affected areas.

"It is critical that fire and emergency departments across the country remain in their jurisdictions until such time as the affected states request assistance," said U.S. Fire Administrator R. David Paulison. "State and local mutual aid agreements are in place as is the Emergency Management Assistance Compact and those mechanisms will be used to request and task resources needed in the affected areas."

Paulison said the National Incident Management System is being used during the response to Hurricane Katrina and that self-dispatching volunteer assistance could significantly complicate the response and recovery effort.

FEMA prepares the nation for all hazards and manages federal response and recovery efforts following any national incident. FEMA also initiates mitigation activities, trains first responders, works with state and local emergency managers, and manages the National Flood Insurance Program and the U.S. Fire Administration. FEMA became part of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security on March 1, 2003.

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